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A NEW GREEK COURSE

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It is well known that a large majority of college students are now graduating not only without any knowledge of the Greek language, but also without any real acquaintance with Greek civilization or any conception of its influence in the world's history. A goodly number of people are sorry to see so many students ignorant of Greek itself; but a very much larger number must lament the fact that men who are supposed to be liberally educated know practically nothing about the Greeks. Whatever may be thought about the language, certainly the civilization as a whole is too great a thing to be neglected. And yet it evidently is being neglected and will be neglected by a great majority of prospective bachelors of arts, wherever the only road to it is through the language. For good or for evil, the colleges are now allowing the public to choose what it will study, and for the most part the public is not choosing to study Greek. The reasons for this will not be discussed here. Commercialism, the desire to avoid studies supposed to be hard, the large number of subjects now presented for the student's choice, and the tendency to reduce the length of the college course by "dove-tailing" with professional schools, all have their effect. But whatever the reasons, one finds increasing evidence in college catalogues that the fact is being reckoned with. More and more Greek departments are offering courses which present one side or another of Greek civilization without requiring any knowledge of Greek. Such are courses in the history of Greek literature with the use of translations, or in Greek life, usually illustrated with the stereopticon, or in Greek art, also illustrated, or in Greek history. These courses, it is true, cannot be given with the same ease and thoroughness as are possible when all the class knows Greek, and in particular the Greek literature must be a very one-sided study; but still such courses can be so given as to be abundantly worth while, and they are bound to be more widely offered.

The course to be suggested here is simply a further step in this same direction. For too many students will leave out even courses like those just mentioned, and will still graduate as ignorant as ever of what has been admittedly one of the greatest forces in the history of civilization. A considerable number, however, who rightly or wrongly think that they cannot spend the time for a course on one side of Greek civilization, will be glad to take three hours a week for half a year in a general course, which should outline the civilization as a whole, trace the main lines of its influence, and aim to bring out the Greek elements in modern life. And it is such a course that I suggest.

I have never heard of a course of this sort being given, and as it has only recently occurred to me, I have not yet given it myself. But it seems to me likely to fill a want, and I venture to speak of it now, as something that others too might care to try. Naturally the subject-matter would have to be presented by lectures, with the usual assigned readings and reports. The following outline of the course may help to make clearer the sort of thing I have in mind:

I. Outlines of Greek civilization.

1. General conditions (race, character, climate, etc.).
2. Religion.
3. Society (manners and customs; economic, industrial, and social conditions).
4. Politics.
5. Language and literature.
6. Art.
7. Philosophy.

Most of the time here would be spent on 5-7, in which the Greeks made their great contributions to world-culture.

II. History of Greek influence.

1. In the Roman world.
 - a) The contact of the Roman world with Greek culture (Alexander; the Roman conquest; Greek and the Greeks in Roman education).
 - b) Extent of influence under 2-4 above.
 - c) Language and literature.
 - d) Art.
 - e) Philosophy.

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| 2. In the Middle Ages | } Arrangement of material under these heads
similar to that under 1. |
| 3. In the Renaissance | |
| 4. In modern times | |

III. Greek elements in our own civilization.

1. Language.
2. Literature.
3. Art.
4. Philosophy.

IV. The modern Greeks and their relation to the ancient Greeks.

The problem of adapting this formidable-looking outline to the time suggested for the course is one that could only be worked out by experience. I need not say that the treatment at almost every point would have to be very brief; and it is quite likely that some parts would have to be left out altogether. Of course the instructor would rather have a year than half a year; but since a minimum of time is one of our objects, it seems better to keep the course down to half a year, if possible, and not pretend to give more than a bird's-eye view of the subject, at least in Parts I-II. Part IV could very easily be omitted entirely. For the rest, I should restrict Parts I-II, as far as possible, rather than Part III. For this part of the course is one that would be of special interest and immediate value to every student, no matter what his particular interests were. Here under the head of language he could be given a working acquaintance with the Greek elements in English. As a preliminary to this he would have to learn the Greek alphabet—science teachers would be glad of that—and learn how to write, pronounce, and anglicize Greek words. Then would come just enough of Greek word-structure and word-formation to enable him to trace Greek words in English back to their originals in the Greek lexicon. Suitable exercises would fix in his memory some of the Greek stems most common in English, while cultivating the ability to run down others later as he met them. When it came to literature, pieces of English prose and poetry could be assigned to members of the class and reports worked up on the Greek elements in them. And in architecture there is plenty of material in the shape of modern buildings, pictures of which could be used by the student in sharpening his eye for what was Greek. These things occur to one easily as illustrations

of the way in which the student could be put in direct touch with his Greek inheritance. They are not intended to be exhaustive.

Such a course might naturally serve as an introduction, if not a prerequisite, to the other more detailed courses in Greek civilization. Greek literature or life or art could be better given to those who had taken it. It is doubtless true that some Greek teachers would raise the same objection to it which they have raised to the other non-language courses. Against these it has been urged that students who would otherwise have chosen to study the Greek language will be led to take a non-language course or two and be satisfied with that. But even if this point were well taken, the number studying the language is now so small in many places that it could not be much reduced. Of course the language is necessary to real Greek training and culture. But the teacher who insists on the language or nothing may easily end with nothing. And, on the other hand, such a course as I have been speaking of may have an effect exactly opposite to the one which some fear. It may interest students in things Greek so that they will seek a knowledge of the language where otherwise they would not have done so. And this, it seems to me, is the true principle to work on. Under our present system the Greek teacher must reach the public not by any form of compulsion, but by showing the public that he has something interesting and worth while to teach. In such an introductory course he has an opportunity of doing this.

It looks as though the Greek pages in our college catalogues were coming to be a different thing from what they once were. The non-language courses are destined to have a place perhaps equally prominent with the language courses themselves. Beginning Greek has already established itself in most colleges along with the old courses that require previous high-school training. Whether this Greek begun in college is really going to amount to much is as yet uncertain. But in view of the immense number of courses now competing for the attention of the college student, and the common shortening of the college course to three years for those who are going to a professional school, as well as the dislike of students for the relatively long elementary training necessary in Greek—a dislike far less serious at high-school age—in view of all this I am inclined to think

that very few students will be found getting far in the Greek language unless they have begun it in the high school. It is unfortunate that Greek has been dropping out of so many high schools altogether, so that even those who want it there cannot get it. By some judicious suggestions or advice to eligible pupils the Latin teachers of many a high school could continue to secure Greek classes large enough at least to maintain the study, until the present unsettled state of things has worked itself out, and it can be seen where the emphasis in Greek instruction ought to be laid. Meanwhile the college teacher of Greek, by offering courses to meet, as far as possible, all needs and desires, will be helping toward a solution of the problem.